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### **Writing a Philosophy of Teaching Statement**

***What is a philosophy of teaching statement?***

A philosophy of teaching statement is a narrative that includes

- your conception of teaching and learning
- a description of how you teach
- justification for why you teach that way

The statement can

- demonstrate that you have been reflective and purposeful about your teaching
- communicate your goals as an instructor and your corresponding actions in the classroom
- provide an opportunity to point to and tie together the other sections of your portfolio

***What is the purpose of developing a philosophy of teaching?***

Faculty and graduate teaching assistants are increasingly being asked to articulate their philosophy of teaching. This request may be in conjunction with the submission of a teaching portfolio for seeking academic positions, or as a regular component of the portfolio or dossier for promotion and tenure. Philosophy of teaching statements are also requested of candidates for teaching awards or grant applications.

Why do teachers need to articulate their philosophy of teaching? What purposes does a philosophy of teaching serve? It has been recognized by many teachers that the process of identifying a personal philosophy of teaching and continuously examining, testifying, and verifying this philosophy through teaching can lead to change of teaching behaviours and ultimately foster professional and personal growth.

In his book, *The Skillful Teacher* (1990), Stephen Brookfield points out that the development of a teaching philosophy can be used for several purposes:

Personal purpose: "... a distinctive organizing vision—a clear picture of why you are doing what you are doing that you can call up at points of crisis— is crucial to your personal sanity and morale." (p. 16)

Pedagogical purpose: "Teaching is about making some kind of dent in the world so that the world is different than it was before you practiced your craft. Knowing clearly what kind of dent you want to make in the world means that you must continually ask yourself the most fundamental evaluative questions of all—What effect am I having on students and on their learning?" (pp. 18-19)

Gail Goodyear and Douglas Allchin, in their study of the functions of a statement of teaching philosophy (Goodyear and Allchin, 1998), identify another purpose:

"In preparing a statement of teaching philosophy, professors assess and examine themselves to articulate the goals they wish to achieve in teaching.... A clear vision of a teaching philosophy provides stability, continuity, and long-term guidance.... A well-defined philosophy can help them remain focused on their teaching goals and to appreciate the personal and professional rewards of teaching." (pp. 106-7)

### *General formatting suggestions*

**There is no required content or set format.** There is no right or wrong way to write a philosophy statement, which is why it is so challenging for most people to write one. You may decide to write in prose, use famous quotes, create visuals, use a question/answer format, etc.

**It is generally 1-2 pages in length.** For some purposes, an extended description is appropriate, but length should suit the context.

**Use present tense, in most cases.** Writing in first-person is most common and is the easiest for your audience to read.

**Most statements avoid technical terms** and favour language and concepts that can be broadly appreciated. A general rule is that the statement should be written with the audience in mind. It may be helpful to have someone from your field read your statement and give you some guidance on any discipline-specific jargon and issues to include or exclude.

**Include teaching strategies and methods to help people "see" you in the classroom.** It is not possible in many cases for your reader to come to your class to actually watch you teach. By including very specific examples of teaching strategies, assignments, discussions, etc, you are able to let your reader take a mental "peek" into your classroom. Help them to visualize what you do in the classroom and the exchange between you and your students. For example, can your readers picture in their minds the learning environment you create for your students?

**Make it memorable and unique.** If you are submitting this document as part of a job application, remember that your readers on the search committee are seeing many of these documents. What is going to set you apart? What about you are they going to remember? What brings a teaching philosophy to life is the extent to which it creates a vivid portrait of a person who is intentional about teaching practices and committed to his/her career.

**“Own” your philosophy.** The use of declarative statements (such as “students don’t learn through lecture” or “the only way to teach is to use class discussion”) could be potentially detrimental if you are submitting this document to a search committee. You do not want to appear as if you have all of the answers and you don’t want to offend your readers. By writing about *your* experiences and *your* beliefs, you “own” those statements and appear more open to new and different ideas about teaching. Even in your own experience, you make choices as to the best teaching methods for different courses and content: sometimes lecture is most appropriate; other times you may use service-learning, for example.

### ***Sample statements***

The following samples are written by Ohio State faculty and TAs and are examples of various formats you may choose to use.

Learning is, of course, the main purpose of education. It is the goal of every student and the task of every teacher to increase knowledge and understanding in the classroom. I feel that the concept of learning should be focused around four main areas. Independent thought is essential to the development of each student. Being able to form unique independent ideas to solve problems will serve them both in and outside of the classroom. Group interaction is also an important part of learning. Being able to share ideas, validate them with those of others, and teamwork are important processes in social and mental development. The teacher should also be prepared to lead students in the direction they should go to reach correct conclusions and answers, without always providing the answers themselves. Finally, stressing the use of learned ideas and processes in new situations is essential. By using information, students should be able to apply what they have learned to new life or learning situations. Transfer of this sort is what really determines what has been learned.

In order to aid students in reaching their desired learning goals, the teacher must have a clear set of objectives. I feel that teachers should serve a number of purposes. First and foremost, they should act as guides, pointing students in the direction they should go to find answers and solve problems by providing them with the essential information they need to do so. They should also act as advisors or facilitators, especially in the university setting. Students at this level need input and more assistance in deciding on courses to best reach their personal academic and career goals. Instructors should help these students in making important decisions in these areas. Students also need to feel comfortable approaching their instructor for discussion outside of class. By instructors acting as mentors and friends to students, the students can begin to make professional contacts, find professors to aid in career plans and use for recommendations, and have an academic source to call upon when stresses of classes begin to be overwhelming. Instructors need to make education as enjoyable and beneficial as possible for students. By teachers acting in all of these manners, a student's education will be more complete and enjoyable than one in which a student only sees the teacher in the classroom.

Teachers should also set specific goals for students. Mastery of information has always been the goal for teachers, and should continue to be one of the essentials. In addition, long term goals for students should be set, allowing students to work towards goals over time. As a part of this, intellectual development of each student should continue over time, allowing students to use what they are learning later in life. It is also the hope of all teachers that students will develop an interest in the subject area being taught. Although this does not occur in all cases, students should at the very least develop an appreciation for the subject and the material being taught in the classroom.

This leads to an expected question: how does one implement this philosophy? No single teacher will be able to implement all of their personal educational philosophies at one time. By constantly creating ideas for day-to-day use, the teacher can begin to work towards their philosophical goals. Over time, these can become long-term goals, allowing the teacher to develop the teaching styles and methods that work best for them. Finally, by continually asking, "How do I conduct my classes?" the teacher can examine how close or far they are from sticking to their educational goals.

As with anyone involved in education, student or teacher, a personal growth plan should always be included. One never develops socially, intellectually, or academically, without consistently learning new things and striving to further oneself. This can include classes as a part of a continuing education program, receiving regular input from students and consistently attempting to improve their teaching style, or trying new ideas or strategies on a regular basis.

Each teacher needs to have a personal philosophy of teaching to guide their actions and ideas. This list is one I have made to guide myself. It is by no means all-encompassing, but it provides a basis for what I feel about education, and what I want my students to feel when they leave my classroom.

### **Sample Educational Philosophy Statements**

#### **Sample #1    My Philosophy Statement on Education**

I believe that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. It is my desire as an educator to help students meet their fullest potential in these areas by providing an environment that is safe, supports risk-taking, and invites a sharing of ideas. There are three elements that I believe are conducive to establishing such an environment, (1) the teacher acting as a guide, (2) allowing the child's natural curiosity to direct his/her learning, and (3) promoting respect for all things and all people.

When the teacher's role is to guide, providing access to information rather than acting as the primary source of information, the students' search for knowledge is met as they learn to find answers to their questions. For students to construct knowledge, they need the opportunity to discover for themselves and practice skills in authentic situations. Providing students access to hands-on activities and allowing adequate time and space to use materials that reinforce the lesson being studied creates an opportunity for individual discovery and construction of knowledge to occur.

Equally important to self-discovery is having the opportunity to study things that are meaningful and relevant to one's life and interests. Developing a curriculum around student interests fosters intrinsic motivation and stimulates the passion to learn. One way to take learning in a direction relevant to student interest is to invite student dialogue about the lessons and units of study. Given the opportunity for input, students generate ideas and set goals that make for much richer activities than I could have created or imagined myself. When students have ownership in the curriculum, they are motivated to work hard and master the skills necessary to reach their goals.

Helping students to develop a deep love and respect for themselves, others, and their environment occurs through an open sharing of ideas and a judicious approach to discipline. When the voice of each student is heard, and environment evolves where students feel free to express themselves. Class meetings are one way to encourage such dialogue. I believe children have greater respect for their teachers, their peers, and the lessons presented when they feel safe and sure of what is expected of them. In setting fair and consistent rules initially and stating the importance of every activity, students are shown respect for their presence and time. In turn they learn to respect themselves, others, and their environment.

For myself, teaching provides an opportunity for continual learning and growth. One of my hopes as an educator is to instill a love of learning in my students, as I share my own passion for learning with them. I feel there is a need for compassionate, strong, and dedicated individuals who are excited about working with children. In our competitive society it is important for students to not only receive a solid education, but to work with someone who is aware of and sensitive to their individual needs. I am such a person and will always strive to be the best educator that I can be.

#### **Sample #2** [Philosophy Statement](#)

##### **I believe the children are our future...**

I believe each and every child has the potential to bring something unique and special to the world. I will help children to develop their potential by believing in them as capable individuals. I will assist children in discovering who they are, so they can express their own opinions and nurture their own ideas. I have a vision of a world where people learn to respect, accept, and embrace the differences between us, as the core of what makes life so fascinating.

##### **Teach them well and let them lead the way...**

Every classroom presents a unique community of learners that varies not only in abilities, but also in learning styles. My role as a teacher is to give children the tools with which to cultivate their own gardens of knowledge. To accomplish this goal, I will teach to the needs of each child so that all learners can feel capable and successful. I will present curriculum that involves the interests of the children and makes learning relevant to life. I will incorporate themes, integrated units, projects, group work, individual work, and hands-on learning in order to make children active learners. Finally, I will tie learning into the world community to help children become caring and active members of society.

##### **Show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride...**

My classroom will be a caring, safe, and equitable environment where each child can blossom and grow. I will allow children to become responsible members of our classroom community by using strategies such as class meetings, positive discipline, and democratic principles. In showing children how to become responsible for themselves as well as their own learning, I am giving them the tools to become successful in life, to believe in themselves, and to love themselves.

### **Let the children's laughter remind us how we used to be...**

Teaching is a lifelong learning process of learning about new philosophies and new strategies, learning from the parents and community, learning from colleagues, and especially learning from the children. Children have taught me to open my mind and my heart to the joys, the innocence, and the diversity of ideas in the world. Because of this, I will never forget how to smile with the new, cherish the old, and laugh with the children.

## **Reflective Practice**

### **What is reflective practice?**

Moon defines reflective practice as "a set of abilities and skills, to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind" (1999: 63). This encapsulates the wide range of activities associated with thinking about your learning. Cowan suggests that learners are reflecting in an educational sense "when they analyse or evaluate one or more personal experiences, and attempt to generalise from that thinking" (1999: 18). However, as Biggs points out, "a reflection in a mirror is an exact replica of what is in front of it. Reflection in professional practice, however, gives back not what it is, but what *might* be, an improvement on the original" (1999: 6).

For the purpose of this course, reflective practice is perhaps best understood as an approach which promotes autonomous learning that aims to develop students' understanding and critical thinking skills. Techniques such as self and peer assessment, problem-based learning, personal development planning and group work can all be used to support a reflective approach (see further the section on [integrating reflective practice into teaching](#)).

When we speak of 'reflective practitioners' we usually refer to adult learners who are engaged in some kind of activity (often professional) which they can use to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. Students in turn need to be encouraged to use situations, for example tutorials, group discussions or placements, as a basis for reflecting on what they have learned.

### ***Using intuition to inform learning***

Drawing on our intuition we do what feels right. It is an emotional response that complements our knowledge and what we understand about a subject, and which enables us to act in a situation. Using intuition to inform learning is referred to in education as developing '**meta-cognitive**' skills.

Encouraging students to acknowledge their intuitive capacity helps them to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses. As one student explains, "it is strange that sometimes you do things or know what things are without ever really stopping and analysing it

It is useful when appraising the success of a course to look at how students' meta-cognitive skills are developed. Asking students why they behaved or interpreted a situation in a particular way can provide useful insights not only into how much and what they understand, but also the extent to which they draw on intuition.

### Exercise

Think about a course for which you are responsible and consider the following questions:

1. Can you identify in which elements students have to draw upon intuition and 'gut' feeling?
2. If you have problems identifying parts where these elements are facilitated within the course, think about the assessment on the course/module. Does this involve the opportunity for the students to demonstrate reflective or intuitive ability?

### ***Reflective Practice and Professional Development***

Reflective practice can be a beneficial process in teacher professional development, both for pre-service and in-service teachers. This digest reviews the concept, levels, techniques for, and benefits of reflective practice.

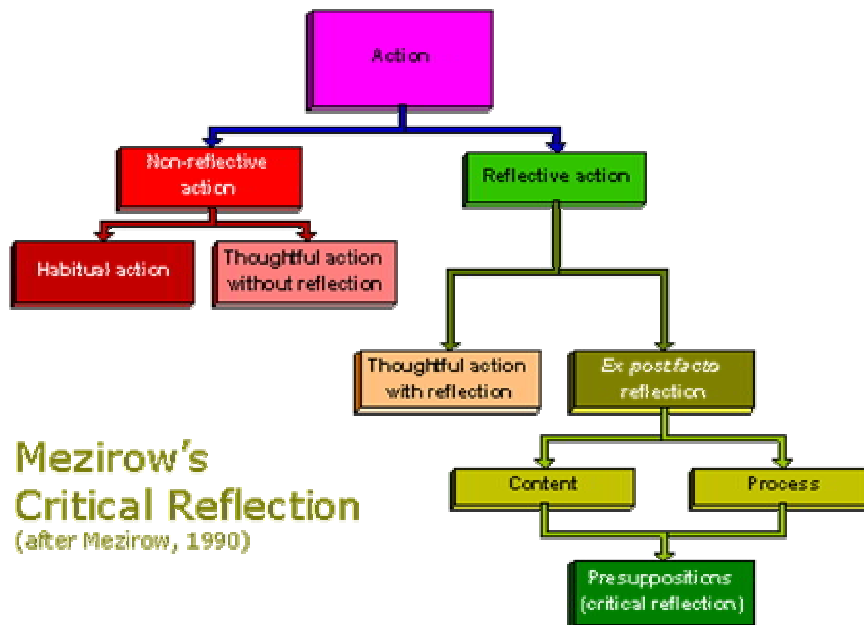
#### **BENEFITS OF REFLECTION IN PRACTICE**

The primary benefit of reflective practice for teachers is a deeper understanding of their own teaching style and ultimately, greater effectiveness as a teacher. Other specific benefits noted in current literature include the validation of a teacher's ideals, beneficial challenges to tradition, the recognition of teaching as artistry, and respect for diversity in applying theory to classroom practice. Freidus (1997) describes a case study of one teacher/graduate student struggling to make sense of her beliefs and practices about what constitutes good teaching. Her initial pedagogy for teaching was based on the traditions and practices of direct teaching. Her traditional socialization into teaching made it difficult for her to understand that her views of good teaching were being challenged in her practice. But the opportunity for exploration through reflective portfolio work enabled her to acknowledge and validate what she was learning.

#### Critical Reflection

Critical reflection has been elevated to the major objective of adult education in the work of [Mezirow \(1990\)](#).

"Perhaps even more central to adult learning than elaborating established meaning schemes is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances. This is a crucial learning process egregiously ignored by learning theorists." (Mezirow, 1990:5)



He maintains that such reflection on assumptions and presuppositions (particularly about oneself) leads to "transformative learning"

"Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings. *More inclusive, discriminating permeable and integrative perspectives are superior perspectives* that adults choose if they can because they are motivated to better understand the meaning of their experience."

## Developing a Teaching Portfolio

### *What is a portfolio?*

As an academic, there are different types of portfolios that you might prepare. These include the course portfolio, the professional (scholar) portfolio, and the teaching portfolio.

A **course portfolio** includes information specific to a particular course. Such a portfolio would include syllabi, course materials, sample assignments, and an explanation for the rationale behind the assignments, and how your teaching methods and your course materials help students learn.

A **professional portfolio** is a collection of documents that you might submit as you go through the promotion and tenure process. This type of portfolio would include all of your



work as a scholar, including your research progress, your teaching experience and accomplishments, as well as your record of academic service.

The **teaching portfolio** describes and documents multiple aspects of your teaching ability. There are two basic types of portfolio.

- A summative portfolio is created for the purpose of applying for an academic job or for promotion and tenure within a department.
- A formative portfolio is created for the purpose of personal and professional development.

Because your teaching experience changes as your career progresses, it is a good idea to periodically update your portfolio(s) in order to keep current with your progress, and to give yourself a regular opportunity to reflect on your teaching. At some point in your career, you may find that you need to keep a summative as well as a formative portfolio, since they serve different purposes; note, though, that those two portfolios may have several materials in common. The materials provided here focus on the teaching portfolio.

Some people describe a teaching portfolio as a place to summarize your teaching accomplishments and provide examples of classroom material. Others describe it as a mechanism and space for reflecting upon your teaching. And for the rest of us, it can be described as a space to do both.

### ***What are some characteristics of effective portfolios?***

The format of a portfolio varies considerably. An effective portfolio should be well documented and organized. The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) suggests that a teaching portfolio should be structured, representative, and selective.

#### **Structured**

A structured portfolio should be organized, complete, and creative in its presentation. Some questions for you to think about might be: Is my portfolio neat? Are the contents displayed in an organized fashion? Are the contents representative for the purpose that it is intended?

#### **Representative**

In addition to attending to structure, a portfolio should also be comprehensive. The documentation should represent the scope of one's work. It should be representative across courses and time. Some questions for you think about might be: Does my portfolio portray the types and levels of courses that I have taught? Does my portfolio display a cross-section of my work in teaching?

#### **Selective**

The natural tendency for anyone preparing a portfolio is wanting to document everything. However, if a portfolio is being used either for summative or formative purposes, careful attention should be given to conciseness and selectivity in order to appropriately document one's work. Peter Seldin (1997) suggests limiting the contents of a portfolio to ten pages. We suggest that you limit the contents of your portfolio to what is required by the reviewer while also keeping the purpose in mind.

### ***What are some key functions of a teaching portfolio?***

- It is a way to collect evidence of your teaching ability.
- It provides the reader with a context for your teaching.
- It provides summary data on your teaching in a simple, readable format.
- It is focused on quality, not quantity.
- It is organized and its various sections relate to each other.
- It is an ever-changing, living document.
- It allows for self-reflection.
- It provides an opportunity to be unique and showcase your personal style of teaching.
- The process of creating one is generally much more important and meaningful than the end product.

### ***Why create a portfolio?***

The teaching portfolio can serve many purposes, some of which include the following:

- reflecting on your goals as a teacher,
- assessing your teaching strengths and areas which need improvement,
- documenting your progress as a teacher,
- generating ideas for future teaching/course development,
- identifying your personal teaching style,
- using elements of the portfolio to promote dialogue with fellow teachers,
- considering new ways of gathering student feedback,
- gathering detailed data to support your goals,
- collecting multiple sources of evidence that document the implementation of your teaching goals and their success.

One would use a portfolio during the academic job search, promotion and tenure process, and for personal and professional development.

### ***How does it get used in the job application process?***

There are several ways that you can use your portfolio in the job application process. For example, you could do one or two of the following:

- make it an appendix to your curriculum vitae,
- provide a table of contents of portfolio materials, listing all as available on request,
- bring it to your job interview and refer to it as needed,
- make it an additional item in your application materials, which is referred to elsewhere (e.g., in a 2-3 page required teaching experience summary).

### ***What goes into a portfolio?***

The portfolio describes and documents the abilities of a unique individual, and therefore, no two teaching portfolios look alike. A portfolio can include a number of different types of documents, and which you choose to include will depend on the type of teaching you have done, your academic discipline, the purpose for creating one, and the intended audience..

In spite of the variation that exists across portfolios, here is a short list of documents that often are part of one:

- statement of teaching philosophy,
- description of teaching experience (responsibilities),
- course planning artifacts: sample course syllabi, lesson plans, assignments, exams,
- evidence of teaching effectiveness: summary of student feedback, department evaluations,
- teaching awards and recognition,
- professional development efforts.

The narrative component should answer the following questions:

- Why did you include it in the portfolio?
- How did you use it in the classroom?
- How do you know that it was effective, i.e. that your students learned as a result?
- How has your teaching changed as a result?
- What have you learned about yourself as a teacher?

The portfolio is not, however, simply a binder with all of the teaching documents inserted with random pages of reflection. “It includes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a teacher’s teaching performance....The portfolio is not an exhaustive compilation of all of the documents and materials that bear on teaching performance. Instead, it presents selected information on teaching activities and solid evidence of their effectiveness.”

### ***How should you get started creating it?***

The following is a list of some general strategies on developing a teaching portfolio:

- Start as early as possible.
- Plan well and systematically collect data.
- Develop a good filing system.
- Regularly sort through, organize, and update information.
- Involve others as consultants and contributors.

### ***Looking at a portfolio at another angle***

#### ***What is a teaching portfolio and why do I need one?***

The portfolio or dossier method of presenting material for evaluation and appraisal is used in a number of professional fields in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America and Australia. In recent years, it has gained popularity with university teachers and is now considered to be the norm for documenting the quality of tertiary teaching.

The University of South Australia values excellence in teaching and requires evidence of effective teaching performance to meet probationary expectations, as part of performance management, and in applications for promotion and teaching awards. A teaching portfolio is useful for providing evidence of excellence for these purposes and is also an invaluable reflective tool for self-appraisal and for developing your teaching expertise.

The teaching portfolio plays the same role for teaching as lists of publications and grants play in providing evidence of performance in research, providing a record of your activities, reflections and achievements as a teacher. It is vital to recognise that there is no one prescriptive way to present a teaching portfolio, the style may vary depending on the intended audience and purpose and can take a variety of forms including disc, hard copy, or video.

***What material should be included?***

The usual practice is to collect material for your portfolio on an on-going basis. The following is a guide to the types of information which are commonly included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>descriptive material on teaching philosophy, responsibilities and practices</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a statement of the attitudes, expectations and assumptions underlying your own teaching</li> <li>▪ a statement outlining what you believe are your principal strengths and achievements as a teacher</li> <li>▪ a statement of your teaching practices and commitments (lectures, tutorials, labs, clinics, online materials, etc)</li> <li>▪ a list of the programs, sources, postgraduate students and associated contact hours</li> <li>▪ list of program materials prepared for students.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>the products of good teaching/learning</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ current and past student assessment scores</li> <li>▪ samples of student logs, workbooks, student essays, creative work, online interactions with students</li> <li>▪ supervised theses and other evidence of effective postgraduate supervision.</li> <li>▪ It is usual to comment on why you believe such products are evidence of good teaching/learning using the University Code of Good Practice: University Teaching and/or Code of Good Practice: Research Degrees Supervision.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>description of steps taken to evaluate and improve one's teaching</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ information from students which indicates increasing effectiveness in teaching and a critically reflective approach to teaching</li> <li>▪ information from colleagues, especially with regard to program design, program materials, study guides and online resources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>evidence of scholarly and professional interest in teaching</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ involvement with curriculum development, innovative teaching methods</li> <li>▪ membership of professional societies</li> <li>▪ published research into teaching and learning</li> <li>▪ development of teaching texts</li> <li>▪ University committee work relating to teaching and learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>other evidence</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ invitations to conduct workshops on teaching and learning</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ invitations to teach for outside agencies</li> <li>▪ media interviews on teaching</li> <li>▪ graduate feedback</li> <li>▪ records of awards for excellence in teaching</li> </ul>
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### ***How do I use a teaching portfolio?***

A teaching portfolio is used when applying for appointment, probation, promotion, teaching awards, performance management or any situation where demonstration of quality teaching is required. From the collection of documentary evidence you need to select a subset of the aspects which support the specific purpose of the application. This subset of the portfolio is usually accompanied by a brief summary which is a statement of claims about your teaching.

There are two sets of considerations that need to be taken into account when deciding what to include in your portfolio. First, you need to focus on the purpose of the portfolio and the criteria against which it will be judged. While the primary purpose of any portfolio is to demonstrate a scholarly approach to teaching what you choose to include will depend on the context and the achievements and capacities you wish to emphasise. In some instances criteria will be specified and if this is the case you need to ensure that they are addressed. At the University of South Australia, the Codes of Good Practice Teaching and Assessment are key documents which set out the expectations of the University in teaching. Portfolios which are concerned with teaching related activity need to be framed around these documents. Second, your own individual background will have provided you with a range of (often unique) experiences and achievements on which you can draw to make a case for the particular purpose in hand. Each teacher's portfolio will be different and each time you present a portfolio for the same purpose it will contain new items. Thus, there is no definitive list of items which might be included.

## **WRITING A CV RESUME**

If you are looking for a job, then it is very important that you understand how to offer yourself in the best way to an employer. This is done by writing a 'CV' (curriculum vitae - Latin for 'life story'), called in some countries a 'resume'. Different countries may have different requirements and styles for CV resumes. So you must follow the correct practice for your culture and country. However, we will try to give you important principles and advice.

### **WHAT IS A CV RESUME FOR?**

A CV resume is quite simply an 'advert' to sell yourself to an employer. You should send a CV to an employer when they ask for one in a job advert, or when you are enquiring if any jobs are available. So the purpose of your CV is to make you attractive, interesting, worth considering to the company and so receive a job interview. An employer may have several hundred enquiries about a single job, he or she will only choose a few people who appear suitable for interview.

**Therefore, your CV must be as good as you can make it.**

## **GENERAL ADVICE**

If you are a student, there is probably a career advice office in your place of study. They are there to help. They may have fact-sheets of advice on how to prepare a CV. Make full use of them. However, employers do not want to see CVs which are all written in exactly the same way. Therefore, do not just copy standard CV samples! Your CV should be your own, personal, and a little bit different.

A CV should be constructed on a word-processor (or at least typed), well laid out and printed on a good quality printer. Do use bold and/or underline print for headings. Do not use lots of different font types and sizes. You are not designing a magazine cover! **Do use** plenty of white space, and a good border round the page. **Do use** the spell-check on your computer! (Or check that the spelling is correct in some way)

**Consider** using 'bullets' to start sub-sections or lists.

Because you are using a computer or word-processor, you can easily 'customise' your CV if necessary, and change the layout and the way you write your CV for different employers.

Picture yourself to be a busy manager in the employer's office. He (or she) may have to read through 100 CVs in half an hour, and will have two piles - 'possibles' and 'waste-bin'.

**So yours must be easy to read, short and attractive.**

**There are two communication principles to remember:**

**\*'Keep it simple,.**

**\*'If they didn't hear it, you didn't say it'.**

So, when you have written a first attempt at your CV, get someone else to look at it, and tell you how to make it better.

Ask your friends, your tutors or teachers, your career office, family friends in business. **What you have written may seem simple and obvious to you, but not to an employer!** Go through it again and again with a red pen, making it shorter, more readable, more understandable!

## **Before you start**

Sit down with a piece of paper. Look at the job(s) that you are applying for. Consider how your skills, education, and experience compare with the skills that the job requires. How much information do you have about the job description?

Sometimes employers do not give enough information. Ask for more detail if needed. Spend time researching detail about the job(s) that interest you and information about the employer - their structure, products, successes, and approach - from:

Their own publicity, reports and publications

A library (business reports, trade papers)

College career office

Newspaper reports

The Internet

## ***WHAT TO INCLUDE***

### **Personal details**

Name, home address, college address, phone number, email address, date of birth.

Do you have your own web homepage? Include it (if it's good!).

If your name does not obviously show if you are male or female, include this!

### **Education**

Give places of education where you have studied - most recent education first. Include subject options taken in each year of your course. Include any special project, thesis, or dissertation work. Pre-college courses (high school, etc.) should then be included, including grades. Subjects taken and passed just before college will be of most interest. Earlier courses, taken at say age 15-16, may not need much detail.

### **Work experience**

List your most recent experience first. Give the name of your employer, job title, and very important, what you actually did and achieved in that job. Part-time work should be included.

### **Interests**

They will be particularly interested in activities where you have leadership or responsibility, or which involve you in relating to others in a team. A one-person interest, such as stamp-collecting, may be of less interest to them, unless it connects with the work you wish to do. Give only enough detail to explain. (If you were captain of a sports team, they do not want to know the exact date you started, how many games you played, and how many wins you had! They will ask at the interview, if they are interested.) If you have published any articles, jointly or by yourself, give details.

If you have been involved in any type of volunteer work, do give details.

### **Skills**

Ability in other languages, computing experience, or possession of a driving licence should be included.

### **References**

Usually give two names - one from your place of study, and one from any work situation you have had. Or if this does not apply, then an older family friend who has known you for some time. Make sure that referees are willing to give you a reference. Give their day and evening phone numbers if possible.

## **Length**

Maybe all you need to say will fit onto one sheet of A4. But do not crowd it - you will probably need two sheets. Do not normally go longer than this. Put page numbers at the bottom of the pages - a little detail that may impress.

## **Style**

There are two main styles of CV, with variations within them.

### **Chronological**

Information is included under general headings - education, work experience, etc., with the most recent events first.

### **Skills based**

You think through the necessary skills needed for the job you are applying for. Then you list all your personal details under these skill headings. This is called 'targeting your CV', and is becoming more common, at least in UK.

But it is harder to do. So take advice on whether it is OK in your country and culture, and how to do it best.

### **Optional extras**

It can be good to start with a Personal Profile/Objective statement. This is a two or three sentence overview of your skills, qualities, hopes, and plans. It should encourage the employer to read the rest. You could add a photo of yourself - either scanned in by computer, or stuck on. But make sure it is a **good one**. Get a friend (or a working photographer) to take a **good** portrait. The pictures that come out from automatic photo-machines do not show you at your best!

### **Presentation**

You may vary the style according to the type of job, and what is accepted in your country and culture. So a big company would normally expect a formal CV on white paper. But, just perhaps, a CV applying for a television production job, or graphic designer, could be less formal - coloured paper, unusual design, etc!

Consider using a two column table to list your educational qualifications and courses taken.

### **Covering letter**

When sending in a CV or job application form, you **must** include a covering letter. The purpose of the letter is:

To make sure that the CV arrives on the desk of the correct person. Take the trouble to telephone, and find the name of the person who will be dealing with applications or CVs, and address your letter, and envelope, to that person by name. (In a small company, it may be the managing director. In a medium size company, it may be the head of



section/department. Only in a large company will there be a Personnel or Human Resource Department.)

To persuade the person to read your CV. it must be relevant to the company, interesting, and well produced.

To clearly say what job you are interested in. If you are sending in a 'speculative' CV hoping that they may have work for you, explain what sort of work you are interested in. Do not say, 'I would be interested in working for Widgets Ltd', but say 'I believe my skills equip me to work in the product development department/accounts office/whatever'.

When sending a speculative CV, you may try telephoning later to push your enquiry further.

To say why you want that particular job with that particular employer To draw attention to one or two key points in the CV which you feel make you suited to **that** particular job with **that** particular employer.

Start your letter with an underline heading giving the job title you are interested in. (If you saw the job advertised, say where you saw it.)

Use the style and pattern of a business letter suited to your culture and country. Ask for advice about this. Try to find sample business letters so that you can follow style and layout.

Your career office may have a sheet about this, or show you a sample.

The letter should only be on one side of A4 paper. It must be polite and easy to read.

Also mention when you are available for an interview. Ending your letter with a request for specific extra information may give a positive response.

### ***Application forms***

To apply for some jobs, the employer will send you an application form. You should still use a covering letter, and send your CV also unless told not to. Application forms need as much care to write as CVs. Remember the lessons earlier on this page. Here are some short guidelines:

**Plan** everything you will say on a separate piece of paper. Or make a photocopy of the form, and practice completing it first.

**Only complete the real form** when you are exactly sure what is the best thing to say.

### **Other points**

Keep copies of all letters, applications forms, and CVs sent, and records of telephone calls and names of those you spoke to.

### **The interview**

Learning how to handle an interview is also very important. Your college career office or library may have a sheet or booklet on interview technique. Take as much advice as you can. Try and

'practice' an interview. Ask a friend, or college teacher, to pretend to interview you.

Be positive, and confident (if you can!) but not over-confident. Be well-informed about the company, its record and achievements, about the job and why you want it. Have questions ready to ask about the company and the job. If you are not accepted, some employers may be kind enough to look at your interview notes, and explain to you how you could improve your CV and interview technique. Ask - you can only be refused, and it shows you are prepared to develop and learn; they may make a note about you for future reference.

There is also a good book which may help you:

### **CV Writing**

A CV or Curriculum Vitae is:

- Your Life History
- Your Job History
- Your Achievements
- Your Skills

A **CV** or **curriculum vitae** is a marketing tool. With your CV you will be able to promote yourself. Imagine the CV as being a brochure that will list the benefits of a particular service. The service being your time and skills! When writing a CV look at it from your employers point of view. Would you stand out against the competition (the other candidates) and would the manager want to talk you for a possible **job**? You have to ask yourself these questions when writing your CV or curriculum vitae.

Networking and interviewing are essential for your job hunt and your CV is just the first step in the job search. However a CV will be your first contact with potential employers and will open the door. If you are invited for an **interview** you would then be in a position to explain and expand on what is in your CV.

A CV is an essential tool in your **job search**. When applying for a vacancy you generally first have to send your CV to present yourself to the prospective employer.

### **Curriculum Vitae Format**

#### **Your Contact Information**

Name  
Address  
Telephone  
Cell Phone  
Email

#### **Personal Information**

Date of Birth  
Place of Birth  
Citizenship  
Visa Status  
Gender

**Optional Personal Information**

Marital Status  
Spouse's Name  
Children

**Employment History**

*List in chronological order, include position details and dates*

Work History  
Academic Positions  
Research and Training

**Education**

*Include dates, majors, and details of degrees, training and certification*

High School  
University  
Graduate School  
Post-Doctoral Training

**Professional Qualifications**

Certifications and Accreditations  
Computer Skills

**Awards****Publications****Books****Professional Memberships****Interests**